

RECOGNIZING STEVE SAULS

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Steve Sauls, an extraordinary advocate for the students and the school of Florida International University in my hometown of Miami.

As an experienced member of the administration and leadership at the university, Steve has worked incredibly hard to promote the needs and the interests necessary to make FIU the fine institution that it is today.

Steve is retiring from his current position as vice president of government affairs for the university after 14 wonderful and productive years and has accepted a job as vice president of corporate relations in a private sector firm. I know that Steve will be immensely missed at the university, my alma mater, and will leave a void that will be difficult to fill. I have no doubt that Steve will continue to lead and excel in his new position, and I wish him all the best and FIU all the best in the years to come.

□ 1015

SOCIAL SECURITY CELEBRATES ITS 70TH ANNIVERSARY

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, on August 14, we will be celebrating the 70th anniversary of Social Security, and that is 70 years of a guaranteed, promised benefit to all Americans of a certain age.

I have to say, I was interested to note that I looked on the Social Security Administration Web site, and I did not see any mention of the 70th anniversary. I think the reason is clear. This President, who basically is trying to dismantle Social Security, does not want the Social Security Administration to celebrate this landmark achievement.

Now, the President and House Republicans want Americans to forget how important Social Security has been for seniors and for the disabled for the last 70 years. It is a guaranteed benefit the Republicans want to turn into a risky privatization plan.

I know that the President continues to be on the road pushing his risky privatization plan. Most recently he was there with his mom, Mrs. Bush. And we are hearing that when we come back after the August break, we are going to see the Republican leadership in the House once again move forward with their privatization plan that is going to only aggravate Social Security's insolvency.

Remember: 70 years of a guaranteed benefit.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2361, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 392 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 392

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2361) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). The gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

This resolution waives all points of order against the conference report and against its consideration.

Mr. Speaker, we now have before us the first appropriations conference report. The gentleman from North Carolina (Chairman TAYLOR) and those who have been working with him on the House side, as well as on the Senate side, should be applauded for taking this appropriation process and concept of prioritization and presenting the product that we have before us. The Interior conferees have produced a conference report which is fiscally responsible and does live within strict budget discipline. It recommends for the fiscal year 2006 budget \$26.2 billion, which is actually below last year's enacted level of \$27 billion.

Even though the total number is lower, it still takes into account significant and important and high-priority items, such as wildland firefighting, \$2.7 billion; a \$61 million increase for our National Parks; a \$31 million increase in our National Forest System; and \$106 million increase for the Indian Health Service. Indian programs have been represented at a record \$5.6 billion, which means the funding will provide for schools and hospitals, construction, education, human service needs, as well as law enforcement there.

With those increases there, it has to be significant, and there have to be offsetting balances somewhere else, and that is where the process of prioritization takes place. Once again, whether you like the total and the way it has been done, at least this committee has indeed done that process of prioritization.

I commend the Subcommittee chairman (Mr. TAYLOR); the chairman of the full Committee on Appropriations, the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS); the ranking members who were involved in this, as well as all the conferees, for shepherding this measure, this funding measure through the conference process in a timely and orderly fashion in the midst of a very lean budget climate.

Mr. Speaker, the conference report is obviously not perfect; none of these ever are. We are not totally happy with all of the aspects of it. I, for example, still have a concern over our process that we are doing with Payment in Lieu of Taxes, or the PILT program. This House was wise enough to fund that program at \$242 million; the conference funds it at \$6 million less, at \$236 million. That still is \$30 million above what the Senate tried to accomplish. This program, for example, is the basic funding for rural communities; it is rent that is due on the land that is government owned. If the Federal Government is going to own the land, they need to be able to fully support that.

Hope springs eternal, and we in the West will continue to work on this program in the future with the gentleman from North Carolina (Chairman TAYLOR), the gentleman from California (Chairman LEWIS), and others to make sure that these programs are adequately addressed in the future as well.

In closing, and notwithstanding these concerns, Mr. Speaker, the overall conference agreement is a good, bipartisan product. It has been done in a timely manner. It is the first one before us. It deserves our support.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) for yielding me this time, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

As my colleague from the majority mentioned, the rule is typical to that for all conference reports, and I will not oppose it.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today not in opposition to the Interior and Environmental Appropriations conference report, but, rather, in disappointment that we have not done enough. Indeed, we live in trying times with enormous fiscal constraints, many of which we have brought upon ourselves. As the chairman and ranking Democrat of the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies will probably note today, they did the best that they could with what they were given. Indeed, they did, Mr. Speaker.

I commend the gentleman from North Carolina (Chairman TAYLOR) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS) for their hard and, perhaps most important, their bipartisan work on this legislation. I do believe that they did the best with what the majority gave them.

The Interior conference report includes \$84 million for Everglades restoration in my district and throughout